Budget cut is expected for Sprague

Associated Press

WASHINGTON—Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (D., Mass.) said yesterday that he thinks the budget for the House Select Committee on Assassinations should be cut "much lower" than $4 million, and said it would get no exotic voice analyzers.

"I know that the Congress is not going to go for the amounts that have been talked about," O'Neill said. "And I know the Congress is not going to go for the systems they have talked about."

Asked whether he was referring to such items as stress voice analyzers for testing the truth of tape-recorded statements, O'Neill said, "That's right. They are going to be out."

O'Neill said he understood that the prospective chairman, Henry B. Gonzalez (D., Tex.), had been quoted as saying the committee's first-year budget could be cut back to $4 million from the $6.5 million the committee approved last year.

"It would be my hope that it would be cut back much lower than $4 million," O'Neill said. He declined to name a figure.

The committee was authorized in the last Congress to investigate again the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

It has come under fire because of its request for $6.5 million funding and for clandestine surveillance equipment. House members also have been critical of the committee's outspoken chief counsel, former Philadelphia First Assistant District Attorney Richard A. Sprague, who has demanded the full $6.5 million and a staff of 170.

Gonzalez has contended the special equipment requested was never intended to be used to eavesdrop on anyone and has indicated the requests will be dropped.